

Newsletter of the
Gay and Lesbian Parents
Coalition International

Every plank in the Christian Coalition's "Contract with the American Family" is supported by 60 to 90% of the American public, according to Ralph Reed, the CC's Exec. Director.

Not so, Ralph. According to a nationwide survey commissioned by People for the American Way, the reality is:

Vouchers for private and religious schools

Rejected 60 to 35 percent

Replace public assistance with private charity

Rejected 59 to 32 percent

Amend the U.S. Constitution's religious liberty provisions

Rejected 58 to 34 percent

Abolish federal support for arts, humanities, public broadcasting

Rejected 55 to 41 percent

Restrict abortion, eliminate federal family planning

Rejected 54 to 40 percent

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever does. -- Anthropologist and Lesbian mom Margaret Mead

From the Mouths of Babies

"I'm reconciled to the fact that by and large gay and lesbian culture is an adult thing. Happily there are only a handful of occasions that amount to culture clashes -- when kids meet 'in your face' sexuality. Some are easy to explain and even present opportunities to teach a good lesson. A woman at the Stonewall March walking through Central Park without a shirt on is only doing what any man has the right to do on a hot, summer day. 'Oh,' my son responded, 'I thought she just wanted attention.'"

-- Lesbian mom Cindy Rizzo, Boston

GLPCI Network

Anti-Family "Family Values" in Wash., D.C.

On December 5-6th, the on-again, off-again U.S. Congressional Hearings entitled "Parents, Schools and Values" were finally held. Promised by House Speaker Newt Gingrich to arch-homophobe Lou Sheldon of California's Traditional Values Coalition last Election Day, the hearings proved to be -- as expected -- largely a forum for those opposed to any positive (or even neutral) information about homosexuality. Since GLPCI was not invited to testify about our "parents, schools and values," we submitted the following testimony for inclusion in the *Congressional Record* (selected excerpts below):

To the Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee of the House Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee:

As lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered citizens, we are concerned that the testimony presented at the "Parents, Schools and Values" hearings was slanted towards the agenda of the Radical Right -- one which ignores today's scientific understanding of sexual orientation and promotes silence on almost all aspects of human sexuality behind the labels of "Family Values," "Morality," and "Parental Control."

As taxpaying parents of children in our

(continued on page 7)

I've got Good News and Bad News...

by Tim Fisher, GLPCI's Executive Director

One day in November, I debated a politician at a PBS station on Long Island, talked to families lobbying Congress in Washington, D.C., and was invited to a celebration party in Iowa. The connecting thread? -- second-parent adoption (where a lesbian or gay parent's spouse -- a legal stranger to his or her own child -- is granted all the rights and responsibilities of being a parent by the court).

Although these protections benefit a proportionately small number of our families -- those who created their children as openly lesbian or gay couples (and can afford to go to court) -- the issue of second-parent adoption is hot stuff! In the media, everybody's talking about how these private legal petitions are changing the definition of "FAMILY."

And this fall, we've heard lots of GOOD NEWS. In Boulder, Colorado, a judge granted the first second-parent adoption in the state that gave us Amendment 2. From Iowa City, another first -- and hence the invitation to help celebrate. Then within a week of each other, two Appellate-level decisions (ones that create precedents for other families) from New Jersey and the particularly influential New York Court of Appeals. These victories

(continued on page 8)

Working to Make Same-Gender Marriage a Reality

For the first time ever in the U.S., a statewide governmental body has recommended that lesbian and gay couples be allowed to marry. For over a year, an unprecedented array of gay advocacy groups and supportive straight organizations have been meeting to strategize to win and retain this basic human right -- one that may be as near as a year away given the current proceedings in the Hawaiian courts.

GLPCI urges you to become an advocate for Same-Gender Marriage -- gay and lesbian parents and our children are expected to be a focal point of the coming national debate, and stand to win unprecedented protections for our relationships. Here are our main "Talking Points:"

Today, same-gender couples are not allowed to legally marry in any state -- no matter how long they have been together, no matter how committed their relationship, and no matter how much their families need the protections, benefits and responsibilities that come with civil marriage.

Marriage is an important personal choice and a basic human right. The decision to get married should belong to the couple in love, not the state.

This is not the first instance of government interference in a couple's choice to marry. Less than 30 years ago, interracial couples were prohibited from legally marrying. Today, very similar discriminatory arguments are being used to prohibit same-gender couples from marrying. Legally, religious and civil marriage are two

(continued on page 8)



**Cool, your parents are gay!
Why didn't you tell me?**

...Love, care and respect are the ingredients that make families work, not the gender of the parents.... **It's About Love**
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Bed Death for Moms? by April Martin, Ph.D.

It's true. Most of our conversations about sex begin with "Remember when ...?" spoken in wistful reverie. And the long ago spontaneity of "Oh, my God, you look delicious!" has turned into "Well, maybe a week from Friday, when he sleeps over at Josh's."

As any good reader of crime novels knows, it takes motive and opportunity. The fact that opportunity wanes is one of those grin and bear it realities of parenthood. Lovemaking -- once the stuff of snuggle-down Sunday mornings, playful weekday nights, or why-not? Saturday afternoons -- is now penciled in on the calendar along with orthodontia appointments and soccer games. That is, assuming that when the big day arrives, little Stephanie really has gone to the pajama party, or that both kids really are asleep by ten with no stomach aches or bad dreams to bring them padding to your bedroom door. And assuming you aren't so exhausted or keyed up that all you really want to do is bury yourself in a book or play computer games.

But as for motive, well, that changes too. The things we need sex for in our twenties are not the same things we need it for ten or twenty years later, especially when we have children.

Take ego needs, for one. By the time we get to forty, sex no longer carries the same responsibility it once did for making us feel attractive. Even being attractive doesn't have the same kind of urgency. Our self-esteem is better established. Parenting has rewarded us richly with feelings of worth, purpose, productivity. We are probably accomplished enough in our careers or interests to feel like we have done something useful on the planet. We

know we are deeply loved by partners and children. So if she says "no" one night, it isn't an emergency requiring a diet and plastic surgery. Self-esteem is just not that dependent on sex anymore.

Or security needs. Sex is no longer the barometer of success for a mature relationship. We don't worry that a dry spell is just the hairline crack of a major fault in the marriage which will blow wide open in another week. We know she's in this as deeply as we are, so we've stopped asking for sex just to get reassurance that all is well.

And hormones. Yes, it's true. For some of us, the physical urgency of sexual needs diminishes with aging. If you're both ovulating at the same time, it may be worth getting a babysitter and renting a hotel room. But other times of the month it might go either way, and other factors may become more important. If this frightens any of you young parents out there, don't worry about it. It doesn't really feel like a loss.

And affection. Well, after 17 years together, my partner and I have developed the art of caressing with just a tiny look, a split second touch. It's a private shorthand -- our way of letting each other know many times a day that we cherish our closeness. We can send our affection in a coded subspace message over the heads of children doing homework, or while one of us is on the phone with someone from the PTA. It isn't sex, but it works.

So with lots of the motives for sex diminishing or being taken care of in other ways, why have sex at all? Why indeed? We know couples who don't have sex anymore, ever or hardly ever.

It gets mixed reviews.

When both women are comfortable with it, settled into a deeply loving connection with little desire to rekindle the turbulence of sexual passion, it works just fine. The only problem those couples have is when some silly article in *Cosmo* tells them not having sex means something has failed.

When one woman wants to have sex and one does not, though, times are very hard. They probably won't have sex, since couples tend to have as much sex as whoever wants least (it does have to be mutual, after all). And both of them will need support to figure out how to tolerate their discordant sexualities. If the cause of one woman's lack of desire is hormonal imbalances or the fallout from incest or sexual abuse, they are going to need to offer each other a great deal of compassion and tenderness.

If however, you've got two women who would both like to be having sex, but have sunk into that rut of inertia where they simply don't initiate sex because no one has for so long, it's time to give it serious priority. Tell Grandma immediately that this is a major emergency and she's got to take the kids for the weekend. Dip into the savings account for body oils, negligees, and sex toys. Drown the phone. Rent *Desert Hearts*.

There are, after all, still some important motivations for us aging moms to make love. It's fun. It's sweet. It breaks the tension. It turns off the brain. It reminds you that two bodies can get as close as two souls. It eases guilt, anxiety, grief. It puts things in perspective. And it reminds you who you came to the party with: the kids are here today and gone tomorrow, but the two of you are in it for the long haul.

April Martin, Ph.D. is a therapist in private practice in New York City and the author of *The Lesbian and Gay Parenting Handbook*. Thanks, April! Now -- Dads, will anyone volunteer to write a piece on "Sex, Relationships, and Parenthood" from the male point-of-view? ▼

Marriage Talking Points (from p. 1)

separate institutions. Though many faiths do perform same-gender marriage ceremonies now, they have no legal recognition as civil marriages. The state should not dictate which marriages any religion performs or recognizes, just as religions should not dictate who gets a civil marriage license from the state.

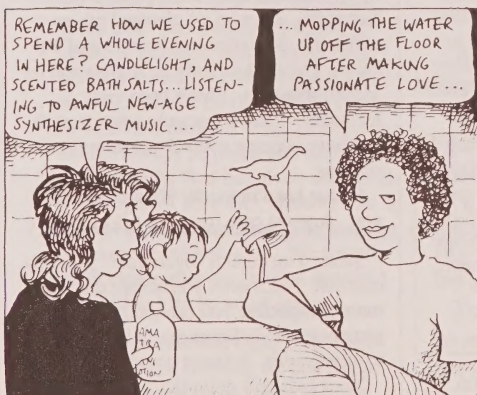
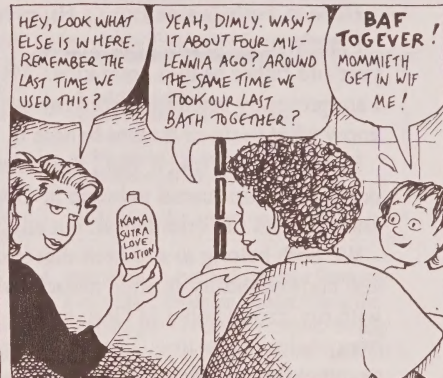
In October, the formation of the

National Freedom to Marry Coalition was made public. You can help the Marriage Movement by becoming a member of the Speakers' Bureau (contact GLAAD -- (212) 807-1700); or help organize a Freedom to Marry Committee in your state (contact Lambda Legal -- (212) 995-8585).

GLPCI is a founding member of the National Freedom to Marry Coalition along with: ACLU Lesbian & Gay Rights Project, Asian/Pacific Islander Lambda Chapter of

the Japanese American Citizens League, National Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum, Gay & Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, Human Rights Campaign, Latino Lesbian & Gay Organization, Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, LIFE: California's Lesbian/Gay & AIDS Lobby, Log Cabin Republicans, LA and NYC's Gay & Lesbian Community Services Centers, National Organization for Women, National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, and Parents, Friends and Family of Lesbians & Gays. ▼

The Family Tub



From the Dykes To Watch Out For 1996 Calendar, reprinted with the kind permission of Alison Bechdel ©1995 and Firebrand Books, 1411 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 14850; \$14.95

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ASK GLPCI -- You asked: Where are good places for
lesbian and gay-headed families to live and to vacation?
Write us with your answer, then check out our next issue.

"I am so glad you're here" -- in Cyberspace!

Editor's Note: Recently, I was so impressed by the work of a group of fathers supporting one another on the Internet, that I e-mailed them to ask permission to share their stories and advice with you. A man named Todd who lives in a rural part of a western state isolated from other gay dads and about four hours from the nearest support group, joined the GAYDADS list on-line to share his story and ask for advice and support from other dads. Over the next five days, the list was flooded with responses -- poignant, personal, and thoughtful -- screen upon screen of encouragement, feeling and genuine warmth. I'll let these amazing men speak for themselves (I've just edited for length).

One dad said it best...."The Internet is an amazing resource for us. We can see that we are not alone! It breaks the silence -- if only privately, on our own little screens. It allows us to explore our thoughts in a safe space and draw on the strength of others. I'm personally of the opinion that the Internet will do as much for gay rights as Stonewall!"

Here is Todd's story: Hi, everyone --

I just wanted to say I am so glad that this group is here. I am a 28-year-old father of two great kids. My daughter is six; my son is five. I am presently separated from my wife -- and quite frankly, I do not know what to do or how to handle it.

I love her very much, but I don't desire her. We have a wonderful bond, and I am scared to break it. She has been my best friend. She knows about my orientation, but still believes that I can overcome it.

We both belong to a church that is quite fundamental in its beliefs, and homosexuality is often associated with demons. I am struggling with my strong belief in God, marriage, and the family -- and my overwhelming desires. I am stuck right now. I don't want to hurt her or my children anymore than I have to, and I don't want to feel like I am evil because I have these feelings.

To be honest, I am afraid of a lot of things. I have a network of wonderful people around me that I love, but I know that their support will be gone if I come out. I love my kids greatly, and I can't lose their love. Another fear is the unknown. What is out there waiting for me? Am I going to end up lonely and guilty? Can I make my way through the minefield of mind games and diseases? Is it worth it?

I am not trying to throw a pity party -- I hate those as much as the next guy. I just need some insight from those who have been there, and would appreciate any input that you guys can give.

Thanks for listening to my ramblings, Todd

Mauro: I can't guarantee that you will not experience some unpleasantness from narrow-minded people fearful of anyone and anything different from themselves, and I understand the special complications presented by the particular community in which you live. But for what it's worth, I think I can speak for most of us in saying we all shared these same fears (especially the fear of a nightmarish custody battle resulting in the loss of our kids after we

are publicly humiliated as pervers).

In my own situation, none of them have come to pass since coming out five years ago. I have not lost any friends (and I have many more now that I don't spend my life being made depressed and miserable by fear). Even my ex-in-laws continue to love me and to expect (require?) my presence at their holiday celebrations. My mom, a very devout and conservative Catholic, would rather not talk about my "private

life," but has consistently said and shown that she loves me no matter what. Ditto my brother, who is a fundamentalist Christian living in Tallahassee, Florida (not a bastion of liberal permissiveness).

Anyhow, I just wanted to say that here is one more gay dad who feared the worst, took the risk anyway (not without years of agonizing soul-searching first) and ended up with a fuller, richer and much happier life. It was and is worth it.

Henry: When I left my marriage, yes, there were tears, angry words, even misgivings on my part. But, I am so glad I took that step. I still have periods when I feel guilty about how I changed my ex-wife's life, but, after two years out of the closet, I have absolutely no regrets and no second thoughts. I have been very fortunate -- I have lost only a few friends and have become even closer to my siblings.

Please keep in touch. We are here for you. And we care for you. A lot.

Jake: You cannot "overcome" your orientation. The sooner you accept this, the more perspective you can gain about someone who believes that it is possible to change you. It is not possible.

Your kids will definitely accept you as you are if you proceed with confidence and love. That's what's great about kids. The sooner you are honest with them about your feelings, the sooner you will have the kind of wonderful, open, and positive relationship with them that you're aching for.

"I'm stronger now, and a better father." -- Dave

As to the people that you love, you must remember that you are **FIXING** things by telling them -- and they will come back if they really care about **YOU** more than themselves. And you will find a new and more positive network of people to love and to love you, as you grow and become whole. How about the dads on this list? What are we, chopped liver? :)

Matt: My wife "outed" me to my 12-year-old daughter a few weeks ago. Her mother told her that we could not live as a family anymore, because I would prefer living with my gay friends than with my family. My daughter saw that as her mother's bitterness and anger talking, knowing that this explanation was

not the whole story. I talked with her about the necessity of a loving sexual relationship between a husband and wife, and how that was not possible for her mother and I to have. She understood that. She wishes my sexuality could be changed, and I explained to her that sexuality is a God-given gift to us which cannot be changed. It is a part of who God made us to be, and that we should always be proud and celebrate ALL the gifts God has given us, including the gift of sexuality, whether that is hetero- or homosexuality. She said she loves me no matter what. We actually seem closer after the "talk"... the talk I had dreaded for so many years.

Wayne: I think that many of us once-in-denial men find that we don't have many friends when it's time to come out. In my case, I attribute my friendless state to being deeply closeted.

It's already been said... the people who love you will stick by you. It may sound harsh, but this is where you get to find out who your real friends are. And you, like many of us, will be surprised at how coming out deepens the friendships you keep. I've been lucky -- only been out for a few months, but my family and casual friends have been

great. And now I have the beginnings of some friendships that were what I wanted for the longest time.

Actually, the only friend I've lost has been my wife, and really I don't think I've lost her entirely. I believe once the dust settles, we'll have re-established a (diminished) friendship. Yes, it's painful (understatement); but for me, it was the right thing.

A dad quoted Lynne Lavner: "The Bible contains six admonishments to homosexuals, and 362 admonishments to heterosexuals. That doesn't mean that God doesn't love heterosexuals. It's just that they need more supervision."

Rich: One thing that really isn't obvious until after you come out is just how much energy goes into pretending to be something other than what you are. Sometimes the coming out experience liberates not just your soul but your energy and enthusiasm. Taking that first courageous step has a multiplier effect -- each succeeding

step is that much easier than the first.

Brian: I too was deeply involved in the church during my married life. I have since left but am looking for another church that is more accepting of me. I've found that fundamentalism is a lot more preoccupied with power and control than with truth.

The rest of your life lays before you, Todd...and you get to choose -- self-worth, goals, priorities -- the whole

Internet Resources for Parents and Kids

Gay/Lesbian Parenting Chat on America On-Line -- Current Schedule:

WED 12-1 a.m. EST; SUN 9-10 p.m. EST

Go To Keyword: GLCF Events, and click on Support Group Icon

Info on COLAGE from KidsOfGays@aol.com

GLPCI Home Page: <http://www.qrd.org/>

[QRD/www/orgs/glpci/HOME.HTM](http://www.qrd.org/glpci/HOME.HTM)

Gay Dads Home Page: <http://userwww.service.emory.edu/~librpi/gaydads.html>

To join the GAYDADS, MOMS, or QUEER-PARENTS lists:

1. E-mail major.domo@vector.casti.com
2. No subject line, on text line type...
3. subscribe LISTNAME FIRSTNAME LASTNAME <your e-mail address>

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enchilada. I can tell you that from my experience living an honest life is the greatest gift of all this turmoil. Being what you are and feeling good about it is a great burden removed from the soul. And there are all those wonderful men out there!!

"We travel this road together regardless of the stage we are all in." -- Jim

Hello again -- I just wanted to say thank you for the overwhelming response to my letter. I truly did not expect this much although I am grateful for it.

You will not know how much it means to me to know that I have so much in common with a lot of you. I know I am not alone and I am encouraged by what all of you had to say. I am closer to coming to a resolve because of your support. I am by no means ready to jump right in, but I am moving closer. I pray that when I do take that leap it will be as one of you eloquently said, "If you don't land on solid ground, you will learn to fly."

Again, thanks to all of you. Please keep in contact, Todd

Thank you to Todd and the other dads who gave their permission to reprint their stories and advice. Names were changed to protect the privacy of the individuals. For those of you who aren't yet on-line, you were perhaps able to glimpse the power of the Internet as a support and organizing tool for our community. Readers, if your family would like to be profiled in this space -- please contact the Editor. ▼

Parents on the Tube • With the explosion of gay characters on television this season, it's not surprising to find lesbian and gay parents among them. Joining the lesbian moms on *Friends* (NBC) and the adoptive gay dad on *Party of Five* (Fox -- a show *TV Guide* called "the best kept secret on TV") are an African-American female judge and her co-parent partner on *Courthouse* (CBS -- sadly canceled); *Grace Under Fire*'s deeply closeted and still married ex-father-in-law and his long term partner (ABC); and Paul's sister on *Mad About You* (NBC), who will come out in January.

Parenting Opportunities • A British Columbia lesbian couple won a B.C. Human Rights Council case in August against a doctor who refused to inseminate them. Dr. Gerald Korn, who operates the province's only sperm bank, was ordered to pay the couple \$2,500 for loss of dignity and \$900 to reimburse them for the cost of seeking insemination in another province. The couple's daughter, Zoe, was born in September. • Tamara Wait of Champaign, IL has become a licensed foster parent. Initially, her application was rejected, because in Illinois only single persons or married couples can become foster parents and Tamara lives with a long-time lesbian partner. Lambda Legal Defense intervened and the decision was reversed.

Custody and Visitation • Lesbian mom Sharon Bottoms is back in the Virginia courts, claiming her living standards have improved and seeking to regain custody of the son she lost in the U.S.'s most famous custody case. Meanwhile, her mother, Kay Bottoms, who currently has custody of 4-year-old Tyler, has been ordered to stop refusing Sharon's once-a-week court-ordered visitation. • In September, the Oklahoma State Supreme Court ruled 5-3 that a lesbian mom is not unfit to have custody of her children because she is a lesbian. The court specifically rejected the logic of the Bottoms case, which said that a child raised by a lesbian mother could be affected by the future negative reaction of the community. • In July, the Tennessee Court of Appeals upheld an award of custody to a lesbian mother, but in its decision mandated that "there should be no inappropriate sexual expression of sexual conduct between the mother and her roommate." • In November, a Texas lesbian mom is appealing her loss of liberal visitation with her two young children, who live in Minnesota. Their father successfully sought visitation limited to his home county, claiming the children would become confused by contact with their mother's lifestyle -- and her poor choices for the kids, which included going to pride parades, taking trips with their mom's partner, corresponding with a gay minister, and innocently showering with mom.

**BOTH OF
MY MOMS'
NAMES
ARE JUDY**



**CHILDREN
OF LESBIANS
AND GAYS
SPEAK OUT**

"An excellent tool for educating teachers about a common, yet completely preventable, form of playground harassment."
Erik Strommen, Ph.D., Dir. of Research, Children's Television Workshop

This 10-minute video was produced as part of an in-service training for elementary-school educators and administrators. It presents a diverse group of children (ages 7-11) who have lesbian and gay parents. In candid interviews, they talk about who's in their families, how it feels to be teased about their parents, how classroom silence about homosexuality affects them, and what they would like to see change.

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For video and workshop materials, send \$25 (individuals) or \$50 (institutions), to:
GLPCI, Box 43206, Montclair, NJ 07043.

Transgendered Parents • In August, a Missouri judge awarded joint custody of two young boys to their post-operative transsexual father and her ex-wife. The boys haven't seen their father in three years and don't yet know of her sex reassignment surgery. • Authorities in England have refused to register the female-to-male transsexual father of his wife's child, conceived by alternative insemination. The case now goes to the European Human Rights Court.

New Legal Protections and Relationships • In November, U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens left intact an order temporarily giving Sandra Holtzman visitation rights to the child she and her former lesbian lover created together. The case in question, a Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling, was historic in recognizing this non-biological mother's "parent-like" relationship after the couple broke up and outlining the criteria for determining such a relationship. • In October, a Brooklyn, New York judge granted guardianship of the child of a deceased mother to Sophia D., her lesbian life partner. The four-year-old boy, whose biological mother died shortly after childbirth, had been sought by various relatives, but the judge ruled that neither race (the child and mother are of different races) nor sexual orientation were sole determining factors in the decision. The ruling said that "the only person who has always been a stable, loving presence in the child's life from the time he was born is Sophia D." and therefore, it is in his best interests to remain with "the only mother this child has ever known." • The new chief Family Court judge in Hennepin County, Minnesota (Minneapolis) has a new interpretation of the second-parent adoption law, one which disallows any unmarried persons the right to petition for second-parent adoptions. The lesbian couple, who are the focus of his ruling, had both adopted their first two children. The third child will have only one legal mother. • The Equal Opportunity Tribunal in New South Wales, Australia ruled that an Insurance Company discriminated against two gay men, by refusing to grant them family health coverage to cover their two-year-old son.

Ceremonies in Europe • In Denmark, a lesbian and a gay activist were legally married in a public protest against the ban on homosexual adoptions and alternative insemination, two rights of marriage denied to Danes who enter into same-gender registered partnerships. • In Farnborough, England, a gay man was told that he could not be the godfather of his infant nephew by Church of England officials, because he is gay. The family moved the ceremony to a more liberal parish, but called on the Archbishop of Canterbury to correct and clarify the ruling.

At the Ballot Box • Jonathan Wilson, a 12-year incumbent on the Des Moines, Iowa school board, lost his reelection bid in September. The gay father, who publicly came out as gay at a school board meeting, was at the center of last winter's debate to add teaching about sexual orientation to the school curriculum. Wilson came in fourth behind two candidates who were supported by the Radical Religious Right which mailed over 100,000 campaign letters on their behalf. The Election Day turnout of almost 30,000 voters was well above the average turnout of 8,000. • Congratulations to Barbara Kavanaugh, elected to Buffalo, New York's City Council as an out lesbian. Housing and education will be the chief concerns of this mother of two. • And Congratulations also to Tina Podlodowski, just elected to Seattle, Washington's City Council as an out lesbian and brand-new mom. Her daughter was born on Thanksgiving Day! • The Citizens Alliance of Washington (state) has until year's end to collect 182,000 signatures supporting a voter initiative to prevent gays, lesbians and a variety of other people from becoming adoptive or foster parents. No word on their progress (last year's campaign failed), but professional signature-gatherers have been spotted. If passed, look for it on the 1996 ballot. ▼

Parents, Schools and Values (from p. 1)

country's public schools, we have additional concerns. This testimony addresses the children of lesbian and gay parents, particularly in two areas: the concept of family diversity and school policies relating to playground taunts.

Family Diversity --

In classrooms all over the country -- as a standard part of elementary school (sometimes even pre-school) curricula, teachers discuss the concept of "Family" with their students. Children are encouraged to bring in or draw pictures of their family, show them to the class, display them on a bulletin board, and write stories about them.

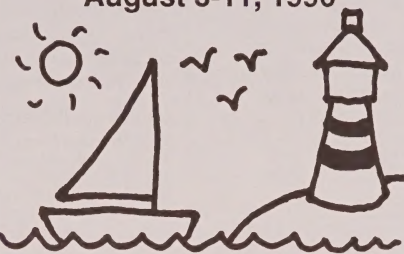
But what about families that don't fit the "traditional mommy-daddy model"? Are these children encouraged to talk openly and proudly about their families? Do schools and teachers acknowledge the diversity of families in their midst? Or do they prefer silence and avoid questions for fear of tackling a controversial issue?

Early childhood educators have identified several important truths about the relevance of family to young children's school experiences:

- Different family configurations are simply a matter of fact -- young children do not assign value judgments to families that are different.
- Young children perceive their families as an extension of themselves.
- A child's attachment to school and the adults in that environment depends on a sense of trust and belonging.

Given these truths, we urge the acceptance of all kinds of families -- including gay and lesbian-headed families -- by America's schools. We encourage educators to talk about our lives with children and parents in our school communities. Our families are not good or bad -- they just are. Many parents of the "Gay-by Boom" are actively involved in educating the educators who are responsible for their children. But a positive and complete discussion of this

August 3-11, 1996



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issue would benefit the millions of children from divorced families where a parent came out later in life, as well as the millions of children who live outside of the large urban centers where gay and lesbian-headed families are less visible.

Playground Taunts--

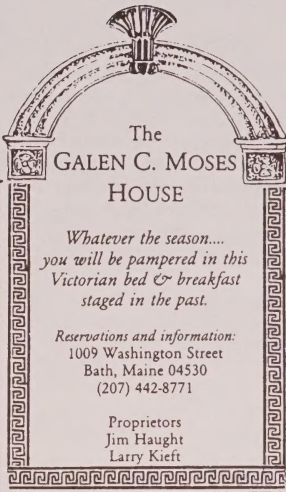
Parents and children around the country report that children commonly use the slurs "faggot," "gay-bob," and "lezzie," as young as the First and Second Grades. These taunts are applied to anyone who is different -- a boy who is unathletic, a girl who is overweight, a kid with glasses, and the children of lesbian and gay parents.

Sadly, teachers and administrators, who would not tolerate racial and religious slurs -- such as "nigger" and "jew-boy" -- and would act swiftly to educate the school community on why these terms will not be tolerated, do not act when homophobic taunts are used. Often these words simply do not register. Again, the silence the children hear from the adults at school teaches them that gay and lesbian people are

not equal, and that discrimination and ridicule are acceptable.

By the time our schools are dealing with the emerging issues of gay and lesbian youth in the upper grades, it is much too late to begin talking about homosexuality and trying to make schools safe for all children. This education must begin in the earliest grades with the simple and neutral acknowledgment that gays and lesbians exist, and that anti-gay language is not permitted. As children develop and grow, additional information about homosexuality must be presented in age-appropriate ways in all curricular areas to insure that safe, inclusive, and welcoming schools will become a reality in America's future.

All children are entitled to come to a school that accepts and nurtures their whole and healthy sense of self, sense of family and sense of belonging. Silence on the subject of homosexuality is a powerful and dangerous message to children and is no longer acceptable to anyone committed to the fair and equal education of all of America's children. ▼



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GN95-4



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Good News About Second-Parent Adoptions (from p. 1)

mean 19 U.S. states and the District of Columbia have now granted second-parent adoptions (see list at left).

However, ever since July, we've been closely monitoring the grumblings from conservatives on Capitol Hill. Every summer, Jesse Helms and company threaten to attach anti-gay amendments to the D.C. Appropriations Bill. This year, the trash has come from the House side and has included the first "Family Values" vote by Congress -- one outlawing second-parent adoption in the District. The BAD NEWS is -- we lost the vote in the House, and the ban may become law. This "anti-family" vote wouldn't just affect those lesbian and gay parents seeking second-parent adoptions, or just those living in Washington, D.C. It's the one chance Congress has -- since they hold D.C.'s purse strings -- to weigh in on the issue of lesbians and gays as parents. If the anti-adoption language is finally passed by the full Congress, the signal sent to state legislatures and family court judges would be powerful and destructive to all our families -- of all types.

There are currently 20 D.C. families that have second-parent adoption petitions pending, and the emotional rollercoaster has been exhausting for them. Our hopes, our thoughts, our efforts are with them. But regardless of what happens, there is more GOOD NEWS here.

First, a lot of people have worked very hard to educate your Representatives about our families. Since August, GLPCI has been a key player in a coalition of groups (including the Human Rights Campaign, Log Cabin Republicans, People for the American Way, and the American Civil Liberties Union) and individuals (including legal expert Nancy Polikoff). To all those naysayers who complain about the Inside-the-Beltway groups being out-of-touch and ineffective -- and to all those parents who complain that these groups don't understand or even think about our issues -- I want you to know this coalition has done excellent work against almost impossible odds.

Second, as we've grown, GLPCI has developed an effective grassroots network -- and you, our members, have played an important role in these developments. We've contacted thousands of you in key Congressional districts -- providing you with talking points and asking you to call or write your Representatives and educate them on this issue. Your letters and calls to the Capitol have worked; we got the votes we needed in the committee -- it's the full House that's causing us trouble now.

Third, we've proved that people (even politicians) are educatable on our issues. When a group of lesbian and gay parents brought their little ones into the halls of Congress for lobbying day, the Representatives and staffers saw real people -- families just like theirs. They saw adorable kids, held them on their laps, and were sorry to see them leave. I'm convinced that it's actually very easy to get the public past the labels and to see us as individuals and families worthy of respect and equality -- when we connect through our beautiful happy, healthy children. A little visibility goes a long, long way.

But here it is December, and as you've probably heard, the government has shut down twice already over Congress and the President's inability to come to an agreement on the budget. On the D.C. Appropriations Bill alone, there have been umpteen compromises on school vouchers, abortion, domestic partnership, and gay adoption -- and all have fallen through. I've been holding this newsletter for a couple of weeks now, hoping that this matter would be resolved -- but tomorrow, it's off to the printer. Who knows when they'll reach an agreement that holds and what the final Bill will say? Meanwhile, we'll keep hoping -- and working -- for more GOOD NEWS in a Happy New Year!

Look for the next issue of *Network* in March.

DEADLINE: February 15, 1996

Questions?; Moving?; Ideas, Suggestions, Clippings from your local press? Write to: *GLPCI Network*, P.O. Box 43206, Montclair, NJ 07043; or call/fax (201) 783-6204.

Job Opportunity: COLAGE Assistant Director

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Wanted: "Valuable Families"

A psychologist (and future lesbian mom), working on her dissertation and possible book about our families, is seeking lesbian and gay parents with children, ages Birth to Adult, to respond to a questionnaire and for a possible interview. Please contact: Jane Drucker, Ed.M., M.A., Box 1843, Studio City, CA 91604; (818) 760-3904.

Second-Parent Adoption Juggernaut

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